



# Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement

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## U.S., Finland Reach Child Support Agreement

By **Katie Donley**  
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**O**n April 3, the United States and Finland signed a bilateral agreement to enforce each others' child support cases. With the agreement, American citizens both here and abroad will be assured that states can find non-custodial parents living in Finland and that the Finnish government will do all it can to ensure that child support orders can be enforced much like they would by another U.S. state.

### Global Update



United States Ambassador to Finland Marilyn Ware and Director General Irma Ertman, Finland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, signed the bilateral child support enforcement agreement April 3.

increasingly important as more people cross and recross international borders as a result of globalization. Without such an international agreement, enforcement of child support obligations across international borders is difficult, if not impossible.

OCSE is working closely with the Department of State to initiate additional bilateral agreements so that the benefits of such agreements can further the chance of U.S. children getting the financial support they need. The United States now has

OCSE has a strong commitment to federal-level agreements that help children receive support wherever they are. International cooperation on family law matters has become

federal-level agreements with 10 countries and the majority of Canadian provinces. **CSR**

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## 'Katrina' Offices Reopen to Appreciation

**O**CSE Commissioner Margot Bean visited three child support offices in April that recently reopened after the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Ms. Bean heard from staff how they have overcome obstacles, and presented them with a certificate of appreciation from Dr. Wade F. Horn, HHS Assistant Secretary for Children and Families.



In New Orleans, Commissioner Bean is flanked by District Manager Anjanette Brown-Perkins, left, and Regional Administrator Lydia Scales.

*See New Orleans, page 3*

# Increasing the Collection Rate: In Search of Successful Techniques

**By Eileen Brooks**

*Director, State, Tribal and Local  
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from the National Child Support Enforcement  
Strategic Plan for FY 2005–2009 (available  
online at [www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse)):

**W**hat do Pennsylvania, North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Vermont, New Jersey, and New York have in common? They are the FY 2004 top 10 performers on the current support collection measure, with rates ranging from 74.4 percent to 64.7 percent. The national rate was 59.9 percent that year, the most recent for which data are available.



***Families come first. Child support should be a reliable source of income for families. Parents must meet their financial and emotional responsibilities to their children and we will help those who are struggling to do so. Reliable child support and medical coverage are particularly crucial for families striving for self-sufficiency.***

While performance varies among states, the national rate, just short of the 60 percent national target for 2004, continues to increase each year. The national annual current collection rate target is determined by factoring in historical actual performance with consideration given to ongoing activities and new strategies in the Child Support Enforcement Program. Although the continued increase in performance is a good sign, we should strive to do better.

In fact, improving our current collection rate is a national performance goal. Why? Consider these words

OCSE used the Logic Model to plan activities intended to increase the national current support collection rate. Go to [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/grants/) and look under Grants Resources for an “Instructional Guide – Creating and Using the Logic Model for Performance Management” for help in planning activities in your own state, tribe, or local jurisdiction. Remember that the full incentive amount on the current collection performance measure for an individual state can be achieved with a rate of 80 percent or more!

The recent passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-171) contributes a sense of urgency to our task and a need for partnering among CSE, TANF and work programs. In TANF reauthorization, both work participation requirements and work supports are strengthened for families on assistance. The aim is for more families to enter the economic mainstream and fewer children to grow up in poverty. Increased funding to encourage responsible fatherhood is also authorized in this Act. The CSE program received new and expanded enforcement tools and distribution options that will allow states to provide more support directly to families, especially families who formerly received assistance.

See **RATE**, next page

OCSE is undertaking activities that we expect will lead to better performance in collecting on current support:

- Spotlight the national goal of increasing the child support current collection rate.
- Use reports, articles, conference workshops, or workgroups to promote practices that are known to lead to more timely current support payments. Practices include reducing undistributed collections, increasing debits of noncustodial parent accounts.
- Issue guidance and provide technical assistance to encourage increased levels of automation in areas likely to improve the current collection rate. Examples include automating review and adjustment, providing automated performance data to local jurisdictions and individual workers, increasing use of outbound interactive voice systems or call centers to contact noncustodial parents for initial support payments before income withholding begins.
- Sponsor peer-to-peer training (May 2006) on strategies for improving collection of current support, as well as prevention and management of arrears; follow-up with a report on research and grant findings, best practices, and recommendations.
- Sponsored peer-to-peer training (January 2006) for large urban jurisdictions to increase the use of effective practices for urban caseloads; follow-up with a report covering strategic planning in urban settings and development and use of timely local performance data.
- Use teleconferencing to work with states, employers, and federal agencies to increase wage withholdings and garnishments; follow-up with guidance and training on using New Hire data.
- Raise awareness of the value of techniques that support more consistent collection of current support, such as: using mediation to establish orders for the never-married population, minimizing routine use of default orders, initiating problem-solving courts for child support dockets, and outreach to courts and parents to ensure child support payments (IV-D and non-IV-D) are made through State Disbursement Units.
- Issue a research compilation on incarceration, re-entry and child support and a related resource guide on lessons learned from OCSE grants and IV-D programs.

If you have ideas for improving the current collection rate or strategies that you would like to share, please send them along with your name and telephone number to Sue Sosler at [ssosler@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ssosler@acf.hhs.gov). Together we will make a difference! **CSR**

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**NEW ORLEANS**, *from page 1*

The three offices were the Jefferson Parish Office of the District Attorney, the Orleans Parish Office of the District Attorney, and the New Orleans District Office of Support Enforcement Services. The latter had been submerged in several feet of water and has just been rebuilt. Staff are back, working in spartan conditions

and working off a satellite connection with their automated system.

“What impressed me the most,” says Commissioner Bean, “was the positive attitude of the staff in what are still difficult circumstances. Many still have to find places to live and then move ... their neighborhoods are still completely demolished.” **CSR**